



U.S. Department  
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# News Release

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*Washington, D.C.* -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West, Jr., has appointed department Chief of Staff Harold F. Gracey, Jr., to serve as the acting head of the newly established office of the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology.

Secretary West established the new information technology office to strengthen management of the infrastructure that handles sensitive information on more than 25 million veterans and to ensure continued improvement in service to eligible veterans, dependents and survivors. The Office of Information and Technology will oversee the operation of a vast array of computer systems and telecommunication networks that store and share medical information; process compensation, pension and other veteran benefit payments; manage six veterans life insurance programs; and help maintain VA financial management systems. VA accomplishes this through a wide area network interconnecting three centralized data centers in Austin, Texas; Hines, Ill.; and Philadelphia; 172 VA medical centers; 58 regional benefits offices; more than 600 outpatient stations; over 200 readjustment counseling centers; and VA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Secretary West named Gracey the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology. Gracey will serve as Acting Assistant Secretary and direct the operations of the new office until an Assistant Secretary is in place.

Secretary West said, "During Harold Gracey's tenure as Chief of Staff since January 1994, he has served two Secretaries of Veterans Affairs, the Deputy Secretary and our veterans with uncommon skill and devotion. In his new position, he will enable the department to fill a critical new post in a timely fashion with a tested executive."

Gracey said, "Our mission in this new office will be to help the Department use information technology in providing the best service possible to our nation's veterans and their families. The challenge is to keep our focus on veterans, not on technology."

A native of Baltimore, Gracey began his federal career in 1970 as a management intern with the Department of the Army at Fort Meade, Md., and later Fort Dix, N.J. He was a manager at the Department of Health and Human Services from 1974 until 1983, when he joined VA as a program analyst with the Office of Information Resources Management. In 1985, Gracey became director of the Plans and Contracts Service, an office in what was the forerunner to the Veterans Benefits Administration. He was named Executive Assistant to VA's Chief Benefits Director in 1988 and served as Chief of Staff to VA's Under Secretary for Benefits from 1990 until January 1994.

Gracey has received numerous awards and recognition during his government career, including the highest awards for career executives -- the Meritorious Executive and Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank Awards -- from President Clinton in 1993 and 1994.

Gracey earned a bachelor of arts degree from Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University.

Leigh Bradley, special assistant to Secretary West, will serve as interim Chief of Staff until a new one is selected.